

The Midwife.

A PRELIMINARY COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BREAST-FEEDING IN PRIMIPARÆ.

The elderly primigravida has, according to most authorities, a slightly longer labour and a higher percentage of deliveries completed artificially than younger primigravida. It will perhaps be interesting to consider her as a nursing mother, and to see if she is less able to feed her baby than a younger woman.

It would be reasonable to believe that the functional activity of the mammary glands is affected as age advances: there is usually some amount of fibrous degeneration, the breasts are usually less supple, and the nipple is tougher.

Psychologically, the elderly primipara is usually keen on nursing the baby herself. The exercise of this new function is to a well-balanced woman a pleasure. She is also as a rule more enlightened as to her maternal duties in this respect than a very young mother.

The following details are necessarily a very incomplete record of breast feeding, as the

observations were only made during the first ten days of the puerperium, but it is comparatively rare to find a woman who is an unsatisfactory nurse during this period improve later: there are, of course, exceptions. It was the idea of the writer originally to follow up each

case, but it was found impracticable; the mothers belong to a class that are constantly moving about from place to place, and even when it is possible to interview them the efficiency of the nursing is difficult to determine: this paper, therefore, only touches the fringe of an enquiry into the present day efficiency of the working class woman as a nursing mother. The value of insisting on breast-feeding or partial breast-feeding is clearly shown, since in a



MOTHERHOOD.

sequence of a hundred elderly primiparæ (*i.e.*, those over thirty) there are only four women who proved incapable of nursing the child to some extent during the first ten days. Women suffering from albuminuria, heart disease, mania, epilepsy, marked anæmia, were excluded; those who had premature infants, twins, or babies suffering from difficult forceps deliveries were

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)